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Circle Dance as a Teaching Tool in Occupational Therapy

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1. Circle Dance

It derives from the tradition of folk dances and is practised worldwide. Participants hold hands in a circle and repeat a pattern of steps, following the rhythm dictated by the music and related to specific dances.¹

2. Teaching tool

Circle dance has previously been introduced to the OT curriculum of the University of São Paulo by the first author.^{2,4} It has recently been introduced to BSc (Hons) and MSc Occupational Therapy programmes at the University of Cumbria as a tool for working with groups.

6. Conclusion

The students perceive circle dance as a potentially valuable tool for working with groups in various settings. However, they highlight the need for further training which would give them the necessary skills and confidence to apply circle dance in a therapeutic way.

3. Objectives

Students learn the dances, reflect on their experience and consider the therapeutic use of circle dance in an OT setting. Self-expression is not the primary aim and the process of learning movements and positions takes place within a social and cultural context.³

4. Approach

The teaching approach focuses on skills acquisition and develops the students' ability to perform the dances in a collective way, whilst teaching the cultural and historical background of the dances.⁴

5. Evaluation

It suggests that circle dance is perceived as a unique and enjoyable occupation, which provides an opportunity to connect with others through movement, whilst promoting well-being.

"Inspiring! It has opened my eyes as to how dance can have a therapeutic effect on my body, mind and soul".

"Very good experience! I am not a person who would volunteer to dance but I felt confident and included".

References

1. Borges da Costa, A.L., Cox, D.L. (2016) The experience of meaning in circle dance. *Journal of Occupational Science*, 23(2):196-207.
2. Borges da Costa, A.L. (2012) Occupational therapy, circle dance and well-being: the need for research. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*, vol. 75, no. 2, pp.114-116.
3. Norris, R. S. (2001) Embodiment and Community. *Western Folklore*, 60 (2-3):111- 124.
4. Borges da Costa (2014) *An investigation of circle dance as a medium to promote occupational well-being*. PhD Thesis, University of Bolton, U.K.

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